



## Moore County, North Carolina

First time *100 Best* winner, Moore youth and responds to their most

County listens to pressing needs. By partnering within the community, Moore County gives their children both a strong academic program and a strong personal support system. Moore County places youth in leadership roles, empowering them to advocate for themselves, their peers and their community. The future is in their hands, and by giving them responsibility now and providing them with support along the way, Moore County is building the leaders of tomorrow.

The Moore County Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with local businesses, offers an Entrepreneurial Boot Camp for high school students to explore their business leadership skills. The camp provides youth with the opportunity to learn from successful business leaders and to create and present business plans to a panel of bankers for review. This professional learning environment gives youth insight into what they can achieve as a business leader of tomorrow. Youth leadership is encouraged and incorporated into grant-sponsored programs such as Teens against Tobacco Usage (TATU). TATU trains teens to address tobacco policy with school administrators and also to provide peer support for students attempting to quit tobacco. There are 60 teens in TATU who sponsor activities to increase awareness of the harmful effects and addictive nature of tobacco. Students are exposed to and involved in state level tobacco policy making.

Moore County believes collaborating and sharing resources creates the best opportunities and outcomes for youth. The dropout problem is one that impacts every sector of the community and requires collective attention. Recently more than 45 community leaders met to view the 'High Cost of Dropping Out', a Communities In Schools presentation showing the direct cost of dropping out to the community. As a result, education, business, community and government leaders renewed their commitment to make youth a priority. In 2008, Moore County initiated a study on the impact of poverty on youth within Moore County. More than 20 community groups worked together to produce this study, including the county's health department, NAACP, community colleges, local nonprofits and local law enforcement. The lesson learned was that education and community collaboration are keys to not only survival, but real change. The challenge lies in maximizing quality opportunities for all youth to help themselves and others, especially the disadvantaged and children of military families. To solve this, the community collaborates to provide youth with the opportunity to help others in a meaningful way, as well as develop personal character skills. One excellent example of youth helping others is Operation Military Kids. This program, operated by Moore County 4-H youth, offers many services and resources to more than 1,200 military students whose parents are stationed at Ft. Bragg. 4-H youth serve as camp counselors and form speaker bureaus to inform the community of the unique needs of military students.

Recognizing that obesity is also an issue among our youth, more than fifteen community partners joined to support Communities In Schools, a dropout prevention organization, and its FirstSchool Garden Program. This brings a healthy choices curriculum to more than 3,000 students in eight schools. Students combine hands-on learning in math, engineering and water conservation with nutrition and physical activity. Its success has garnered statewide recognition as a model obesity prevention project and new partners are providing funding for expansion.

*Article from America's Promise Alliance, [www.americaspromise.org](http://www.americaspromise.org)*